

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. In combination with a set of individual containers, an identification system for distinguishing among the individual containers, the identification system comprising: an identifier member associated with each of the containers in the set for facilitating visual discrimination of each of the containers from the others of the set, the identifier member of each container in the set comprising a plurality of distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia positioned over a surface portion of the container and an opaque covering material covering the printed identifying indicia, the opaque covering material being removable to selectively expose a preselected one of the printed identifying indicia so that during consumption of the contents of the container a user may readily distinguish his container from the other containers in the set by visual inspection of the exposed printed identifying indicia.

2. A combination according to claim 1; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the printed identifying indicia until the coating is scratched off to expose the preselected printed identifying indicia.

3. A combination according to claim 1; wherein the content in each of the containers in the set comprises an alimentary product.

4. A combination according to claim 3; wherein the alimentary product comprises a beverage.

5. A combination according to claim 3; wherein the alimentary product comprises a food product.

6. A combination according to claim 1; wherein each of the containers in the set comprises a can containing a beverage and having a sidewall; and wherein the identifier member is disposed on the sidewall of the can.

7. A combination according to claim 6; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the printed identifying indicia until the coating is scratched off to expose the preselected printed identifying indicia.

8. A combination according to claim 1; wherein the plurality of distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia of the identifier member comprises a plurality of first distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia and the surface portion of the container comprises a first surface portion of the container; and wherein the identifier member further comprises a plurality of second distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia associated with each of the containers in the set and each corresponding identically to a respective one of the first printed identifying indicia, each of

the second printed identifying indicia being disposed over a second surface portion of the container different from the first surface portion and being generally aligned with the corresponding identical one of the first printed identifying indicia.

9. A combination according to claim 8; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the first printed identifying indicia until the coating is scratched off to expose the preselected printed identifying indicia.

10. A combination according to claim 1; wherein the opaque covering material of the identifier member has a plurality of visible discrete areas each covering a respective one of the printed identifying indicia.

11. A combination according to claim 10; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the printed identifying indicia until the coating is scratched off to expose the preselected printed identifying indicia.

12. A combination according to claim 1; wherein the identifier member further comprises a substrate layer having a first main surface on which the printed identifying indicia is printed and over which the opaque covering material is disposed

to cover the printed identifying indicia, and an adhesive layer material disposed on a second main surface of the substrate layer opposite the first main surface for adhering the substrate layer to the surface portion of the container.

13. A combination according to claim 12; wherein the identifier member further comprises a removable backing layer disposed over the adhesive layer for protecting the adhesive layer prior to adhering the substrate layer to the surface portion of the container.

14. In combination with a set of individual containers, an identification system for distinguishing among the individual containers, the identification system comprising: an identifier member associated with each of the containers in the set for facilitating visual discrimination of each of the containers from the others of the set, the identifier member of each container in the set comprising a plurality of distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia positioned over a first surface portion of the container and an opaque covering material disposed over a second surface portion of the container different from the first surface portion thereof and having a preselected color, the opaque covering material having a color which contrasts with the preselected color of the second surface portion of the container and having a plurality of visible discrete areas each corresponding to a respective one of the

printed identifying indicia, each of the visible discrete areas of the opaque covering material being selectively removable to expose the preselected color of the second surface portion of the container so that during consumption of the contents of the container a user may readily distinguish his container from the other containers in the set by visual inspection of the exposed preselected color of the second surface of the container corresponding to the removed discrete area of the opaque covering material and by visual inspection of the printed identifying indicia corresponding to the removed discrete area of the opaque covering material.

15. A combination according to claim 14; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the preselected color of the second surface portion of the container until the coating of the selected visible discrete area is scratched off to expose the preselected color of the second surface portion of the container.

16. A combination according to claim 14; wherein the content in each of the containers in the set comprises an alimentary product.

17. A combination according to claim 16; wherein the alimentary product comprises a beverage.

18. A combination according to claim 16; wherein the alimentary product comprises a food product.

19. A combination according to claim 14; wherein each of the containers in the set comprises a can containing a beverage and having a sidewall; and wherein the identifier member is disposed on the sidewall of the can.

20. A combination according to claim 19; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the preselected color of the second surface portion of the container until the coating of the selected visible discrete area is scratched off to expose the preselected color of the second surface portion of the container.

21. A combination according to claim 14; wherein the identifier member further comprises a substrate layer having a first main surface on which the opaque covering material is disposed, and an adhesive layer disposed on a second main surface of the substrate layer opposite the first main surface for adhering the substrate layer to the second surface portion of the container.

22. A combination according to claim 21; wherein the identifier member further comprises a removable backing layer disposed over the adhesive layer for protecting the adhesive layer prior to adhering the substrate layer to the second surface portion of the container.

23. A combination according to claim 21; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the preselected color of the second surface portion of the container until the coating of the selected visible discrete area is scratched off to expose the preselected color of the second surface portion of the container.

24. In combination with a plurality of groups of separate containers, an identification system for distinguishing among the containers within all of the groups, the identification system comprising: an identifier member associated with each of the containers in each of the groups for facilitating visual discrimination of each of the containers within any group from one another and from the containers of other groups, the identifier member associated with each of the containers within all of the groups comprising a set of distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia positioned over a surface portion of the container and an opaque covering material covering the set of printed identifying indicia, all of the sets of printed identifying indicia within any group of containers being substantially visually identical to one another, the sets of printed identifying indicia of each group of containers being visually distinct from the sets of printed identifying indicia of other groups of containers, and the opaque covering material of the identifier member associated with each of the containers of the sets within all of the groups being removable to selectively

expose a preselected one of the printed identifying indicia so that during consumption of the contents of the container a user may readily distinguish his container from the other containers within any group and from the containers of other groups by visual inspection of the exposed printed identifying indicia.

25. A combination according to claim 24; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the printed identifying indicia until the coating is scratched off to expose the preselected printed identifying indicia.

26. A combination according to claim 24; wherein each of the containers of each group has a sidewall; and wherein the identifier member is disposed on the sidewall of the container.

27. A combination according to claim 24; wherein the set of distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia of the identifier member for the container in each group comprises a set of first distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia and the surface portion of the container comprises a first surface portion of the container; and wherein the identifier member further comprises a set of second distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia associated with each of the containers in each group and each corresponding identically to a respective one of the first printed identifying indicia, each of the second printed identifying indicia being



disposed over a second surface portion of the container different from the first surface portion and being generally aligned with the corresponding identical one of the first printed identifying indicia, all of the sets of second printed identifying indicia within any group of containers being substantially visually identical to one another, and the sets of second printed identifying indicia of each group of containers being visually distinct from the sets of second printed identifying indicia of other groups of containers.

28. A combination according to claim 24; wherein the opaque covering material of the identifier member for the container in each group has a plurality of visible discrete areas each covering a respective one of the printed identifying indicia.

29. A combination according to claim 28; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the printed identifying indicia until the coating is scratched off to expose the preselected printed identifying indicia.

30. A combination according to claim 24; wherein the identifier member for the container in each group further comprises a substrate layer having a first main surface on which the printed identifying indicia is printed and over which the opaque covering material is disposed to cover the printed

identifying indicia, and an adhesive layer disposed on a second main surface of the substrate layer opposite the first main surface for adhering the substrate layer to the surface portion of the container.

31. A combination according to claim 30; wherein the identifier member for the container in each group further comprises a removable backing layer disposed over the adhesive layer for protecting the adhesive layer prior to adhering the substrate layer to the surface portion of the container.

32. A combination according to claim 31; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the printed identifying indicia until the coating is scratched off to expose the preselected printed identifying indicia.

33. An identification system for identifying a container, the identification system comprising:

a substrate layer having a first main surface for connection to a surface portion of a container;

a plurality of distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia each for identifying the container and disposed on a second main surface of the substrate layer; and

an opaque covering material covering the printed identifying indicia, the opaque covering material being removable to selectively expose a preselected one of the printed

identifying indicia for identifying the container by visual inspection of the exposed printed identifying indicia.

34. An identification system according to claim 33; further comprising an adhesive layer disposed on the first main surface of the substrate layer for adhering the substrate layer to the surface of the container.

35. An identification system according to claim 34; further comprising a removable backing layer disposed over the adhesive layer for protecting the adhesive layer prior to adhering the substrate layer to the surface of the container.

36. An identification system according to claim 35; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the printed identifying indicia until the coating is scratched off to expose the preselected printed identifying indicia.

37. An identification system according to claim 33; wherein the plurality of distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia comprises a plurality of first distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia and the surface portion of the container comprises a first surface portion of the container; and further comprising a plurality of second distinct and visibly different printed identifying indicia each corresponding identically to a respective one of the first

printed identifying indicia, each of the second printed identifying indicia being configured to be disposed over a second surface portion of the container different from the first surface portion thereof so as to be generally aligned with a corresponding identical one of the first printed identifying indicia.

38. An identification system according to claim 37; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the first printed identifying indicia until the coating is scratched off to expose the preselected first printed identifying indicia.

39. An identification system according to claim 33; wherein the opaque covering material has a plurality of visible discrete areas each covering a respective one of the printed identifying indicia.

40. An identification system according to claim 33; wherein the opaque covering material comprises a coating of scratch-off non-transparent material that conceals the printed identifying indicia until the coating is scratched off to expose the preselected printed identifying indicia.